

Last year, we did take a key step in the right direction by passing the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. But make no mistake, Madam Speaker. That was the beginning, and we cannot allow it to end there.

I am grateful that my colleague, DAVID CICILLINE, plans to reintroduce an assault weapons ban. I, too, am choosing to act. I will soon reintroduce my bill to stop online ammunition sales.

Madam Speaker, I stand here confident that my Democratic colleagues will stand behind this commonsense legislation.

From Sandy Hook to Uvalde, from Monterey Park to Trenton, New Jersey, every mass shooting is a policy choice. Democrats are prepared to choose better, and I demand that my Republican colleagues do the same.

#### SOCIAL SECURITY AND THE DEBT CEILING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. LARSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Madam Speaker, Ronald Reagan was prescient in his description of Congress, especially as Congress addresses issues, most specifically, the debt ceiling.

Here is what Ronald Reagan had to say about Congress:

Congress consistently brings government to the edge of default before facing its responsibility. This brinkmanship threatens the holders of government bonds and those who rely on Social Security and veterans benefits.

Let me repeat that: those who rely on Social Security, you could add Medicare and veterans benefits.

That is what is at stake here.

Reagan went on to say:

Interest rates would skyrocket, instability would occur in the financial markets, and the Federal deficit would soar.

Why, then, would our colleagues on the other side of the aisle hold the American economy hostage?

In their own words: so they can cut Social Security and Medicare.

They call these programs entitlements.

For all of those listening to this, make sure you call your Member of Congress, and let them know that Social Security is not an entitlement. It is an earned benefit. It is something that people pay for weekly, biweekly, or monthly.

How do they know?

How do we trust and verify this?

All you have to do, Madam Speaker, is go to your pay stub. It says: FICA. That stands for Federal Insurance Contribution. That is Federal Insurance Contribution.

Whose?

Yours—the more than 66 million Americans who contribute to this program. It is an earned benefit. It is not an entitlement.

They clearly are entitled to their Social Security.

But here we have the ruse of the year. We are going to hold the American economy hostage so that we can make cuts to a program that Congress hasn't enhanced in more than 52 years on our watch—ours being every Member of Congress. We cannot let this persist.

Fortunately, because of hard work in the past, seniors are receiving a COLA this year because of COVID. But it has not been reformed, it is not permanent, and there hasn't been a benefit enhancement in 52 years.

In 1971, a loaf of bread cost 72 cents. I don't have to go through the litany of how costs have risen.

With 10,000 baby boomers a day becoming eligible for Social Security, this is not the time to cut the program. This is a time to enhance the program so that all of our seniors—especially those who were hit hardest by the epidemic.

How do we know this?

Of the more than 1 million people who passed away from the pandemic, over 750,000 are over the age of 65.

And who is impacted most by inflation?

Those people who are on a fixed income, and by definition, those on Social Security are on a fixed income and need our help the most during this time of inflation. It impacts every single district in this country.

On average, there are 147,000 Social Security recipients in every congressional district, and to deny them the enhancements that they need during this inflationary time and during a time period when Congress has not enhanced the program in more than 52 years is long overdue.

#### SAINT VALENTINE'S DAY MASSACRES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. CASTEN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CASTEN. Madam Speaker, this has been a bloody week in America. It seems like every day we have woken up to news of another mass shooting, starting with the one 5 days ago when a gunman, armed with an assault pistol and high-capacity magazine, killed 11 Californians as they celebrated Lunar New Year.

Three weeks from now, Valentine's Day will be the 15th anniversary of a mass shooting on the Northern Illinois University campus in DeKalb. The shooter started firing at 3:06 p.m. By 3:11 p.m.—just 5 minutes later—he had taken his own life. But not before firing off 55 rounds of ammunition, killing 6 people and injuring another 21.

In Parkland, Florida, on Valentine's Day they don't memorialize Northern Illinois University, they memorialize the anniversary of the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. That shooting lasted for 6 minutes, 139 rounds were fired, 17 people were killed, and 17 were injured.

Six months from now, on Independence Day, folks in Highland Park, Illi-

nois, will be memorializing the first anniversary of a mass shooting when 83 rounds were fired, 7 people were killed, and 48 were injured before the police—who were present at the scene—could even identify the location of the shooter.

We do not get our holidays back unless we act.

Too often, this body has responded to these shootings with thoughts and prayers. Prayers that the American people won't notice that some of my colleagues are putting the economic interests of gun manufacturers ahead of people's lives. But every once in a while, we do act. I want to talk about what we are capable of when we are touched by the better angels of our nature.

To do that, let's flash back to another Valentine's Day not that long ago. Two Chicago gangs were fighting over narcotics turf. One of them surprised the other, and in a flash of bullets, seven people were dead. Chicagoans and Illinoisans—Americans—were outraged. Yes, these were gang members, but they didn't deserve to die.

The Saint Valentine's Day Massacre was in 1929. It was when Al Capone's Italian gang killed seven members of Bugs Moran's Irish gang as whiskey bootleggers fought over drug turf. And we acted. That shooting led to the passage of the National Firearms Act that banned civilian access to fully automatic Tommy guns and any rifle with a barrel longer than 18 inches.

That law is still on the books today. It saves lives, and no one has ever claimed it was unconstitutional.

By the way, Madam Speaker, if you weren't expecting that a story about Chicago gangs was going to be about White people, I would like to thank you for attending today's class in critical race theory. As that poet Ice Cube says: You better check yourself.

But I digress.

Seven people died in 1929, and we acted. Eleven people died on Lunar New Year 5 days ago. There have been 40 mass shootings in the first 26 days of this year, over 1,300 gun homicides in the United States this year, and another 1,700 gun suicides. I am proud that my State of Illinois has just passed an assault weapons ban. It is time for this body to do the same.

I know I speak for all Americans when I say that I want to enjoy my next holiday without fear of getting shot, and that inaction in the wake of way too many avoidable deaths is completely unacceptable.

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#### PRIORITIES FOR 118TH CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota). The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Nevada (Mrs. LEE) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. LEE of Nevada. Mr. Speaker, I rise today for the first time during this

118th Congress to call for unity and bipartisan action in this Congress.

This is a call that echoes across this House from commonsense Republicans and Democrats who are ready to focus on what unites us rather than what divides us. It is a call that echoes across my district in the State of Nevada from independent-minded folks who are tired of Congress playing games and politics as usual. It is a call that echoes across the entire country.

In November, every one of us in this Chamber won the support of our constituents, and the trends were clear: Extremism is out, and real results are in.

Last Congress was different. Democrats had control of the House, the Senate, and the Presidency, but we didn't close the door on our Republican colleagues. Instead, we brought them to the table and led together to deliver results for all Americans, and the track record shows it:

The bipartisan PACT Act, now law, protecting healthcare for veterans exposed to toxic burn pits and Agent Orange;

The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, now law, the first major gun safety action in decades;

The bipartisan CHIPS and Science Act, now law, increasing our economic edge in a global economy and ensuring that we make more of everything in America;

And, of course, the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, now law, the investment of a generation in every corner of this country: roads, bridges, ports, airports, internet access, water solutions for the West, and so much more.

These accomplishments are significant, and they will stand the test of time because we brought Democrats and Republicans together to make them happen.

Voters defied midterm predictions, recognizing that Democrats deliver by putting people over politics and joining hands with our commonsense colleagues across the aisle, but the work continues.

What we can work on together will always outweigh what holds us apart. We all want to tackle inflation. We all recognize the need to address the historic drought and to secure future water supplies for all Americans. We all want to fix our broken immigration system, to build one that strengthens our security without compromising our values as a nation of immigrants.

Congress is at our best when we put policy first and politics last. That is what the American people want.

CONGRATULATING REBEL GIRLS & COMPANY

Mrs. LEE of Nevada. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the UNLV Rebel Girls & Company dance team for winning yet another national championship title.

This program is no stranger to success, and this makes eight wins for the university in the last 15 years. This time they even achieved a 99.1, the

highest hip-hop score in program history.

Coming from the entertainment capital of the world, the decorated dance team and crew have always represented Nevada well, and their stellar performances have even dazzled audiences across the globe. Their many titles are a reflection of the hard work of each and every person involved, especially the leadership shown by Head Coach Marca DeCastroverde.

The past, present, and future of this program is so bright, and I speak on behalf of all of Nevada as we continue to cheer them on.

Congratulations, UNLV Rebel Girls & Company, on yet another success.

#### SECURE OUR SOUTHERN BORDER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. MALLIOTAKIS) for 5 minutes.

Ms. MALLIOTAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight one of the crises that we are facing in our country, and it is obvious to so many—except, unfortunately, so many in this House—that we have a crisis at our southern border.

We have not only seen over 4.7 million people cross illegally, many of whom are claiming asylum despite not qualifying for asylum, but we are also seeing record levels of fentanyl killing so many Americans each and every single day. We must take a stand to secure our border to stop this flow of illegal drugs, to stop this mass illegal migration.

When you talk about the number of 4.7 million, when you think about the number of people who have actually evaded our government, who have evaded any interaction with our law enforcement and CBP agents, you are talking about 1.2 million people. That is more than twice the size of Staten Island, the borough in New York City I represent.

It is outrageous to think that we would have individuals entering our country illegally, and we don't know what their intentions are, where they are coming from, why they are here. That is what scares me the most as an individual who represents the city of New York.

We know that 98 suspected terrorists on our terrorist watch list crossed the border last fiscal year, and we know, so far this year, there have been another 38. That should be alarming to every single person in this country.

We must know who is entering our country and what their intentions are. To allow this amount of people to evade law enforcement, to evade any interaction with our government, is a very dangerous action on behalf of this administration.

House Republicans believe that Secretary Mayorkas has completely abdicated his responsibility to keep our country secure, and we will be moving forward with hearings to expose what he is doing. I do believe at the end of

the day it warrants him being impeached and removed from his position.

Also, I highlight how the Federal Government's lack of action at the border, coupled with my State legislature's and Governor's horrible actions in New York, have led to what we are seeing now in terms of a rise in crime.

First of all, New York is dealing with major actions in terms of crime, car thefts, people being released. In fact, I just read yesterday that, in my district, a 20-year-old guy who has been stealing cars is being released right back onto the streets. It has been about three times. The first time he was arrested, it was for 20 counts of car theft.

Let's now look at what we are doing here. When I went down to Federal Plaza and met with our ICE officials, they are saying that New York City is not cooperating with any detainer requests for people who are criminals. That means they either were convicted of a crime in their home country or were convicted of a crime here.

It is the worst of the worst in society that ICE is trying to remove from our country, and our local officials won't cooperate. I think it is outrageous that the city of New York continues to harbor people who are not only in this country illegally but are committing crimes on top of it.

Just the other day, New York City residents found out that they are paying to house, paying to feed, paying to provide services to individuals who were shoplifting in our State. Think about that. Not only are they crossing into our country illegally, but after committing crimes, they were released back onto the street thanks to our State's ridiculous bail law, and on top of it, the taxpayers of the city of New York are paying to house and feed them. How does that make any sense, and how is that in the best interests of our citizens?

I am the daughter of immigrants. I understand and appreciate the aspirations of the American Dream. We need to work together to address what is happening at our border. We need to work together to ensure that those legitimate asylum seekers are not getting stuck in the bureaucracy and the red tape because of those individuals who are here claiming asylum when they don't qualify.

We have to work on our visa system to ensure that we address the labor shortage. We should have more visas, employee-sponsored visas, and family-sponsored immigration, as well.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to secure our border. Let's impose some common sense.

#### HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN ARTSAKH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, for 46 days, the Government of Azerbaijan